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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/BCLTV, NP, T

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TAGS: [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#) [PSI](#)

SUBJECT: PSI: UPDATE ON SECURING THAI ENDORSEMENT

REF: A. STATE 39747

[B](#). BANGKOK 1886

[C](#). BANGKOK 1772

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert J. Clarke

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: After a year and a half of U.S. and other lobbying, Thailand apparently has made the basic policy decision to be more supportive of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and is moving through the final steps towards endorsement of the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles (SOP). However, we should not underestimate the bureaucratic obstacles that remain and it is not yet clear when the decision will reach the Cabinet for final approval. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's final scrutiny of the decision will be key and his endorsement cannot be taken for granted. Sustained, high-level USG engagement on PSI will help to ensure the top Thai political leadership understands the importance the United States places on Thai participation in PSI. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Despite high level engagement by Washington, Embassy Bangkok and others, the RTG has yet to formally endorse the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Statement of Interdiction Principles (SOP). In March, the Ambassador demarched then Foreign Minister Surakiart about PSI. At that time, Surakiart said that endorsement was a matter of time, but noted that a few RTG agencies continued to hold out on endorsement because of concerns over legal authorities related to PSI. The Ambassador's demarche followed up on the February conversation between Under Secretary Bolton and the Thai MFA Director General for International Organizations (Kittiphong) in Tokyo. Our counterparts at the Australian Embassy in Bangkok also regularly engage the Thai on PSI. Despite these demarches and others at the Operational Experts Group (OEG) meeting in Sydney, the Thai have moved only slowly towards endorsement.

[1](#)3. (C) However, embarrassment over the awkward departure of the Thai delegation from the March 21-22 PSI OEG meeting in Omaha -- after they were informed that only countries who had endorsed the SOP would be welcome to participate -- seems to have spurred the Thai towards action on PSI. In recent meetings MFA officials have been at pains to stress to Poloffs that the RTG is moving towards endorsement. MFA chaired an intra-agency meeting on April 4 in order to address the legal concerns of holdout agencies and to reach consensus on endorsement among all involved agencies. (Note: MFA officials claim that the Ministry of Defense (MOD) was the agency with the most serious reservations about legal authorities and obligations under PSI and has been holding up the process. Yet, in numerous conversations with Emboffs, MOD officials have not expressed these concerns. End Note.)

[1](#)4. (C) MFA officials claim that they were able to achieve informal consensus on endorsement at the April 4 intra-agency meeting. Following that achievement, MFA prepared a formal decision memo on endorsement of the SOP and circulated it among all cabinet ministries. According to MFA, there are a few ministries who still have to sign off on the decision memo. After all the clearances have been gathered, the memo will be sent to the Thai Cabinet for final approval -- where Prime Minister Thaksin, if he agrees, will personally sign off on PSI SOP endorsement.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: We believe that Thai endorsement on the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Statement of Principles (SOP) is close. Emboffs have been fielding Thai queries related to the formalities involved in endorsement such as -- "what is the correct format for the diplomatic note?" or "how should we inform other countries that we have endorsed PSI?" -- and we have been told privately that we will have "good news" soon. These are all positive signs that our campaign for final Thai endorsement is getting beyond the misunderstandings, complicated Thai bureaucratic rituals, and a previous unwillingness of the MFA to take a leadership role. It appears that the Thai legal concerns related to PSI have been overcome.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment continued: The RTG has taken a year and a half to get to this point on PSI SOP endorsement despite regular engagement. Given typical Thai bureaucratic slowness, it will still be a challenge to get the ministries

to take the final step and move the decision memo up to the cabinet. A second challenge is that cabinet approval will subject the PSI SOP to the reality of the mercurial decision making style of Prime Minister Thaksin. At past cabinet meetings, Thaksin has rejected individual items at cabinet meetings expected to be approved as a formality, over the recommendations of his ministers. So we cannot take endorsement for granted. We should continue to press the Thai for endorsement in order to ensure that the political leadership, and specifically the Prime Minister, understand the importance we place on PSI. End Comment.
BOYCE